

REMARKS

I. Amendments

Independent process claim 1 is amended to provide some additional clarity and to more specifically define the aqueous washing solution to include the three components of water, sulfolane, and an amine that is selected from a list of specifically recited amine compounds, and, further including the compound of piperazine. The piperazine compound is required to be present in the aqueous washing solution in an amount in the range of from 0.7 mol/l to 0.9 mol/l. Support for these limitations is found in the published specification in paragraphs [0004], [0007], [0008], [0021], and [0027].

Independent composition claim 15 is amended in a similar manner as is claim 1.

Claims 5-8, 10-11, 17-19, and 21-22 are cancelled.

Dependent claims 9 and 20 are amended to include a more narrow concentration range for the piperazine compound of the aqueous washing solution. Support for the more narrow range is found in paragraph [0021] of the published specification.

New claim 23 is added to specifically define the amine compound to be MDEA.

Other amendments made to the claims are merely to provide additional clarity in the claim language.

II. §112 Rejection of claim 14

It is submitted that the amendments to claim 14 obviate this rejection.

III. §102 Rejection of claims 1-6 and 15-18

Independent claims 1 and 15 have been amended to require the claimed aqueous washing solution (absorbent liquid) to comprise the four components of water, sulfolane, a specified amine compound, and piperazine. Each of the four components is to be present in the aqueous washing solution in a specific concentration range. It is specifically noted that the piperazine is to be present in the aqueous washing solution in an amount in the range of from 0.7 mol/l to 0.9 mol/l.

The Schubert et al. patent discloses an absorbent composition that comprises an aqueous solution of piperazine and MDEA, wherein the amount of piperazine in the aqueous solution is

critical and must be present in an amount greater than 1 mole per liter. See e.g., abstract; column 2, lines 17-24; and claim 1.

It is submitted that the applicants' claimed invention is not anticipated by the Schubert et al. patent, which requires its absorbent composition to have piperazine present in an amount greater than 1 mole per liter. This is substantially outside the applicants' range for piperazine of from 0.7 mol/l to 0.9 mol/l. The amount of piperazine in the Schubert et al absorbent composition is indicated to be critical, and, thus, there are no broadening equivalents disclosed by Schubert et al., and, indeed, Schubert teaches against the applicants' concentration range for piperazine.

IV. §102, or alternatively, §103 Rejection of claims 7-14 and 19-22

Due to the cancellation of claims 7-8, 10-11, 19, and 21-22, this rejection is only pertinent to claims 9, 12-14, and 20, as they are now amended. These claims are dependent claims, and, thus, the limitations of the independent claims from which they depend are also included within these claims. As noted above, the claimed four component aqueous washing solution requires the piperazine compound to be present in an amount in the range of from 0.7 mol/l to 0.9 mol/l. This is outside the range required for piperazine by the Schubert et al. reference, and is clearly unobvious in view of the Schubert et al teachings that the concentration of this compound is critical.

V. Conclusion

In view of the amendments made to the claims and the above remarks, it is submitted that the claims 1-4, 9, 12-16, 20, and 23 are patentable over the prior art. Thus, the withdrawal of the Examiner's rejections and allowance of these claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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